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ABSTRACT

The student personnel staff at St. Petersburg Junior College, Clearwater Campus, participated in several in-service training seminars to up-date and improve procedures and techniques for dealing with individual students . A consultant from the University of Florida, and the St. Petersburg Junior College Dean of Student Personnel conducted the seminars. Recent advances in counseling theory and research were discussed and critiques of taped counseling sessions were conducted. Most participants felt the program had positive results, especially in the areas of self-evaluation and technique improvement. [Because of marginal reproducibility of original, this document is not available in hard copy.] (JO)

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IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR STUDENT PERSONNEL WORKERS

A PRACTICUM APPROACH AT CLEARWATER CAMPUS

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IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR STUDENT PERSONNEL WORKERS

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We talk an awful lot about professional preparation and in-service training. Each year at meetings like these, we ask ourselves the questions - "Are we doing the job in Student Personnel? Are we providing the services which are needed?" We consider evaluating our programs -- we say to ourselves, "I'm going to evaluate my counseling practice" -- We consider making ourselves more accessible to students - more sensitive to their problems - but somehow when we get back to the job, the office, and the old routine we just never seem to do anything about updating our own practice.

The Student Personnel staff of the Clearwater Campus of St. Petersburg Junior College began to grapple with these questions in the early part of last year. Everyone realized that the department needed to meet the needs of our student population in more realistic and significant ways. We began a series of brainstorming sessions in an attempt to find some answers about new directions and new approaches. After much discussion and real soul-searching we came to the philosophic conclusion that we needed to enhance our procedures and techniques of working with students individually, - in short, we needed to update our counseling practice. This was not a surprising conclusion since many of us consider the counseling process as a cornerstone in Student Personnel work. The final consensus of opinion was that the entire staff needed updating in the professional practice of counseling. To meet the need, we designed and instituted a program of in-service training.

For ten weeks during the spring both of the staffs, at the Clearwater Campus and the St. Petersburg Campus, became involved in an in-service training project for Student Personnel workers, specifically in the area of counseling. The program took the form of a seminar and practicum. A consultant was invited to assist in the in-service training effort, namely, Dr. Jim Lister, Chairman of the Department of Counselor Education, University of Florida. The seminar was conducted one day per week for a ten week duration with three hour sessions held in the afternoon. Since two campuses

were involved, the consultant alternated between campuses bi-weekly, working individually with staff members and conducting an afternoon seminar. On the alternate weeks, when the consultant was not on campus, the Dean of Student Personnel served as leader for the seminar. During the mornings the consultant held conferences with individual counselors, the Director of Counseling and the Dean of Student Personnel. These conferences were essentially unstructured discussions of the counseling operation, its problems, needed changes and possible modifications and innovations. Counselors were encouraged to discuss individual students with whom they were working. Each seminar member was encouraged to make at least one tape per week of a counseling session which he had had with a student. These tapes were brought to the afternoon seminars, played and discussed between consultant and seminar members. Occasionally, the consultant presented brief discussions concerning recent advances in counseling theory and research and provided taped examples of interviews which he had done with local students.

The seminar went well. Everyone participated and seemed to receive benefits. There were many uncomfortable moments when emotions were high. Some counselors felt threatened by the constructive criticism that other members gave. Staff members began to talk about the techniques, their sensitivity. During the weeks, at coffee breaks, two and three were gathered together discussing themselves and their own "hang-ups" in working with students. A fresh approach came in the use of test results and test interpretation.

In the concluding session each member was asked to evaluate the in-service training program.

When asked opinions as to the most helpful aspect of the counseling seminar, some of the responses were:

"The most helpful aspect of the seminar was the opportunity to analyze taped interviews."

"The careful self-analysis which it produced."

"Being able to know our own staff members better. Bringing my sensitivity level and listening level to where it should be."

"It gave me a good opportunity to look at myself and evaluate my techniques and practices."

"Having a consultant come in from a counselor-training program,"

"The chance to interact as a group, more in depth; to train ourselves in being sensitive to what the counselee is saying."

"The realization that we usually do not listen, but should and must."

"The opportunity to share, discuss, etc. each other's counseling techniques and theories and through this to gain individually as well as become more of a team on the whole."

Another question which was asked was, "Are you functioning any differently now than you did before the seminar, - if so, how?" Some of the responses were:

"Yes. I am more sensitive to student problems and listening more in-depth."

"I hope so. I am concentrating more on each counselee and the use of words."

"Yes. In responding technique, listening technique, sensitivity to feeling level and positive regard, my philosophy is now somewhat different."

"I will be much more willing to share experiences with my colleagues and feel that pooling our knowledge can help us all. I am also much more aware of the needs of students."

"Yes. I'm more sensitive to the student."

"I believe that I am functioning differently now because I am more aware of how well I listen and respond to my counselees."

In addition, the counselors were asked to rate the degree to which they felt that the seminar had influenced their philosophy and technique of working with students. The greatest degree of change seemed to be in counselor attitude and technique, specifically in the areas of responding techniques, listening techniques and sensitivity to feeling levels.

The seminar was so successful that this year, the staff is in the process of developing another proposal along the same general lines but on the subject of group counseling.

If Student Personnel is really to become a profession and if counseling is the core of that profession, then we must all continue to update our professional practice.

How many of you would take your 1970 automobile to a mechanic who had been trained only on the 1965 model? How many of you would take the advise of your personal physician if you knew he had done nothing to update his medical technology for the past ten years? Let me ask another question - How many in this meeting, today, have had some updating of professional qualifications within the past five years?